

Message Text

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EXDIS

FROM AMBASSADOR LODGE'S OFFICE

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, IT, VT

SUBJ: VATICAN PERCEPTION OF ITALIAN POLITICAL SCENE

1. VATICAN'S SUBSTITUTE SECRETARY OF STATE BENELLI TOLD US JULY 12 THAT VATICAN WAS SURPRISED AND DISTURBED WITH RECENT SELECTION OF COMMUNIST FOR POST OF PRESIDENT CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES. CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS (DC), HE SAID, HAVE TOLD VATICAN THAT GESTURE WAS NECESSARY IN ORDER OBTAIN COMMUNIST (PCI) AND SOCIALIST (PSI) PARTIES' UNDERSTANDING RE FORMATION OF NATIONAL GOVERNMENT AND ROME GIUNTA.

2. WHETHER UNDERSTANDING WILL MATERIALIZE, ACTION HAS SET DANGEROUS PRECEDENT WHICH WORRIES VATICAN BECAUSE IT UNDERLINES PRE-DISPOSITION ON PARTY OF CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS TO CHOOSE EASY WAY OUT OF DIFFICULT SITUATIONS. ACCOMMODATION IN THIS INSTANCE, HE SAID, IS CONTRARY BOTH TO DC ELECTORAL PLATFORM AND CONTRARY TO WILL OF ITALIAN VOTERS WHO ON JUNE 20 OPTED TO RETAIN DC AS COUNTRY'S MAJORITY PARTY.

3. ACTION ALSO DEMONSTRATED, IN HIS VIEW, LACK OF PARTY DYNAMISM AND MAKES TASK OF REMAKING PARTY EVEN MORE URGENT. DC PARTY, HE SAID, HAD COME BACK ELECTORALLY JUNE 20 DESPITE ITS DELAPIDATED PARTY STRUCTURE AND SLOW-MOVING CAMPAIGN. IN MANY AREAS THE PARTY'S PRESENCE IS IN FORM OF AN "ADDRESS ONLY". A RENEWAL EFFORT

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IS ESSENTIAL AND URGENT. DC MUST, HE SAID, BE ENCOURAGED TO

UNDER-TAKE PARTY RENEWAL ON TWO PLANES. IN THE TRADITION OF DE GASPERI, DC COULD ADMIT A GROUP OF YOUNGER CAPABLE LEADERS AT TOP AND IT MUST REBUILD ITS LOCAL ORGANIZATIONAL BASE. THE FACT THAT POLITICIANS NOW LOOK TOWARDS VACATIONS AND GENERAL ITALIAN PREFERENCE FOR "QUICK FIX" APPROACH, PUTTING OFF SERIOUS MATTERS UNTIL TOMORROW, BRING CURRENT POLITICAL SCENE TO A DANGEROUS POINT. (TO UNDERLINE IMPORTANCE VATICAN ATTACHES TO CURRENT ITALIAN EVENTS, HE MENTIONED THAT HE WILL BE GOING TO THE US TO ATTEND INTERNATIONAL EUCHARIST CONGRESS IN PHILADELPHIA ON AUG. 2, SPEAK ON AUG. 3, AND RETURN ON AUG. 4.)

4. VATICAN AND CHURCH INTEND TO KEEP PRESSURE ON DC TO MAINTAIN DISTANCE FROM HISTORIC COMPROMISE, TO RENEW ITSELF, AND TO ADOPT LONG-RANGE POLICIES FOR RESOLVING COUNTRY'S PROBLEMS, IN THIS EFFORT, CATHOLIC ACTION AND COMUNIONE & LIBERAZIONE WILL CONTINUE ACTING AS GADFLIES. (POPE PAUL, HE SAID, IS COMMITTED TO THE RENEWAL OF CATHOLIC ORGANIZATIONS AND WILL SHORTLY BE RECEIVING IN PRIVATE AUDIENCE THE ECCLESIASTICAL ADVISER OF CATHOLIC ACTION.)

5. IN THE PREVAILING CIRCUMSTANCES, HE SAID, THE USG SHOULD LEAN HARD ON DC LEADERS TO KEEP THEIR ELECTORAL PROMISES. CHARGE OF INTERFERENCE SHOULD NOT ARISE, HE SAID, BECAUSE THIS IS MESSAGE WHICH ITALIAN PEOPLE THEMSELVES GAVE ON JUNE 20. IN THIS CONNECTION, HE THOUGHT THAT USG SHOULD MAINTAIN CLOSE CONTACT WITH ZACCAGNINI, BECAUSE HE RETAINS MUCH PRESTIGE, AND WITH HIS THREE PRINCIPAL ASSISTANTS (GALLONI, BODRATO AND BELCI) BECAUSE, ALTHOUGH LEFTISH, THEY SWAY INFLUENCE OVER PARTY MACHINERY, AND ALSO WITH ANDREOTTI, FANFANI AND FORLANI. IF THERE ARE ANY FORTHCOMING US INITIATIVES, HE SAID, THEY SHOULD BE UNDERTAKEN VERY SOON.

6. WITH REGARD TO ROME, HE KNEW THAT DC WAS WORKING DILIGENTLY TO OBTAIN PSI AND PSDI COOPERATION ON FORMATION OF GIUNTA. THERE IS SOME HOPE IN THIS BUT NEGOTIATIONS ARE BOUND TO BE ARDUOUS. VATICAN HAD HOPED THAT ANDREOTTI WOULD ACCEPT BEING SINDACO (MAYOR), BUT SITUATION IS UNCLEAR AT PRESENT BECAUSE OF ONGOING NEGOTIATIONS FOR FORMATION OF NATIONAL GOVERNMENT. (NOTE: ANDREOTTI IS CANDIDATE FOR PREMIERSHIP.) BEAUDRY

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